



PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

PROGRAM MANUAL



INTRODUCTION

A Teacher's Guide to Field Trips and Education Programs at Padre Island National Seashore

To The Educator...

We are delighted that you are considering education services provided by the National Park Service as a way to enhance your students' learning opportunities. Corpus Christi lies near a true American treasure: Padre Island National Seashore. The National Park Service protects this wonderful natural resource that includes nearly seventy miles of undeveloped beach. That's the longest wild stretch remaining in the continental United States.

This guide is meant to smooth the process of learning, discovery, and enjoyment for you and your students. If it fulfills its purpose, your trip to the National Seashore will result in big smiles, wind-blown hair, happy memories, and a better understanding of one of Texas' most important treasures. You'll find information on planning and preparing for your trip, classroom and field activities for your students as well as area maps and important safety information. We have programs suitable for virtually every age group. If it's not practical to come to the beach, park rangers can pack their traveling trunk and bring the beach to the classroom!

Outreach programs are gaining in popularity during today's tight financial times. Either way, it all begins with a simple phone call or e-mail to the environmental education division to discuss your needs. Please pay particularly close attention to the Reservation Process section before contacting the park to schedule a trip. Read on to find out the details and don't forget that...

...all education services and programs are FREE!



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THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Background Information

The creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, by decree of Congress and President Ulysses S. Grant, launched an idea now embraced around the world. Since the establishment of the world's first national park, the United States system has been expanded to encompass nearly 400 diverse park areas administered by the National Park Service. These have all been set aside to preserve our human and natural history for present and future generations. Collectively, these places present an American science and history textbook, a book that educates us about the people, events, objects, landscapes, and artifacts of the American past and about the aspirations and actions that produced those tangible survivors. The National Park Service emphasizes the educational value of these places and the importance of the stories that connect us to them. The agency goal is to offer a window into the richness of American ecosystems, culture and history and provide an opportunity for understanding who we are, where we've been, and how we, as a society, might approach the future.

National Park Service Mission Statement

The agency mission, as mandated by Congress in the Federal Organic Act of 1916, is to: "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." The mission is not easy to accomplish. To preserve and protect the environment while simultaneously allowing millions of people to use the land is at times contradictory. The National Park Service feels the best way to address the opposing challenges is to provide opportunities for public enjoyment and education while engaged in non-deleterious outdoor activities.

Padre Island National Seashore

Padre Island National Seashore, a unit of the National Park Service, is comprised of some 134,000 acres. It was established in 1962 to "save and preserve for purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration, a portion of the diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped." Today this remarkable barrier island, with its untarnished beaches, dunes, grasslands, marshes, and mudflats, provides a rare opportunity for educating park visitors about the complex and critical processes and interactions that sustain the living world. The Division of Education and Interpretation has chosen the theme of "Connecting People to Parks" as a way of focusing on our goal of helping visitors to learn while experiencing the park. The desired outcome in encouraging these connections is to create memorable experiences, preserve our diverse heritage, and promote stewardship through appreciation and understanding of park resources. The education staff strives to help students develop an understanding and appreciation of the significance of park resources while providing opportunities for them to develop emotional and intellectual connections to the meanings and significance of the National Seashore.

GETTING TO PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE



Padre Island National Seashore is located approximately 30 minutes from downtown Corpus Christi. The most direct routes from Corpus Christi all utilize Highway 358 (also known as “S.P.I.D.”). After merging onto S.P.I.D., follow it south over the Laguna Madre to Padre Island. The road’s name changes to “Park Road 22” as the highway reaches the island. Follow Park Road 22 south down the island for approximately 12 miles, until you arrive at the entrance to the National Seashore.

GETTING AROUND ONCE YOU ARRIVE

Padre Island National Seashore



Padre Island National Seashore is the southernmost of several large barrier islands located along the Texas coast. The park is more than a great playground for people. It's location along the central flyway funnels large numbers of birds through the area in the spring and fall thus making it a vital resting and feeding area. During the spring and early summer another unusual visitor arrives – the Kemp's ridley sea turtle. From April through June the females crawl ashore to lay their eggs before returning to the sea. The natural beach serves another important role. It makes a perfect classroom to provide students with exposure to our coastal ecosystem. We believe you will find the programs offered at Padre Island National Seashore will provide teachers and students with a unique and enjoyable learning experience.

PARK FACILITIES

Malaquite Visitor Center

The primary visitor use facility is known as the Malaquite (pronounced Mal-ah-keet) Visitor Center. All scheduled education programs begin there. The center is located on the left (east) side of the main road approximately four miles after passing the park's entrance station. There is ample bus and automobile parking. The center is wheel chair accessible with ramp accessibility continuing down to the beach. Wheel chairs with oversized tires for use on the beach are available for participants at no charge on a first come, first served basis. If special accommodations are necessary for visitors with disabilities please contact us in advance. We will do our best to accommodate all users.

Restrooms, cold water showers, and changing facilities are available just outside of the visitor center. They are open 24 hours per day with the exception of a brief closure around 7:00 A.M. for cleaning. The shower and restroom facilities are handicapped accessible.

Visitor Center Hours:

Open daily 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

The visitor center is closed on December 25th

Phone: (361)949-8068

Western National Parks Association Bookstore

The bookstore is located in the visitor center and is operated as an educational partnership to assist visitors in learning about the National Seashore. The profits generated through the bookstore sales are donated by Western National Parks Association (WNPA) to the park to support our education programs. Teachers with a school identification card receive a 20% discount off all WNPA items purchased in the bookstore. The store's hours are 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. daily.

Padre Island Park Company

This small convenience type store offers a variety of items such as cold drinks, snack items, pre-packaged sandwiches, and ice, film, and park souvenirs. It is a great place to purchase any last minute picnic needs or other overlooked items for students or trip leaders.

Store Hours:

Open daily 9:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. from September through May

Summer hours during June through August are 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M.

The store is closed on December 25th

Phone: (361) 949-9368

PICNICS IN THE PARK

A limited number of picnic tables are available at the Malaquite Beach Visitor Center. The tables are protected from the sun by a shade structure; however, **in the event of rain, there is no protected area to retreat to**. If foul weather occurs, group leaders may need to depart early due to safety and/or comfort concerns.

Please note that picnic tables cannot be reserved. During late April and May when large numbers of students from different schools are visiting, the tables may fill for short periods around lunchtime. If you can be a bit flexible on your lunch break time, tables will become available. Please help us keep the park clean by reminding the students to use the trash cans. Aluminum and plastic recycling cans are also available. You will be responsible for cleaning up after your group.

Padre Island National Seashore, like other national park sites, prohibits feeding any of the wildlife, including the gulls and other birds. Feeding gulls results in negative impacts on our efforts to help the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle since gulls that have been fed may become particularly aggressive and more abundant than normal. During our releases of hatchling sea turtles the gulls occasionally swoop in and attempt to eat the hatchling turtles. Consequently the no wildlife feeding policy is strictly enforced.

FIELD TRIP/EVENT RESERVATION PROCESS

It is strongly suggested that teachers contact the park before sending in a reservation request. This will allow you to choose a program date that has not already been booked by another group. The months of April and May are especially busy. In order to have the best chance of receiving the exact date that you're searching for, it is recommended that programs for those two months be booked at least sixty to ninety days in advance.

For further information contact the park's Education Coordinator, William "Buzz" Botts.

By e-mail: william_botts@nps.gov

By phone: (361) 949-8068

By fax: (361) 949-9951

By mail: P.O. Box 181300, Corpus Christi, TX 78480

Here are some additional considerations when planning your trip:

- If you are coming out from Corpus Christi, please allow approximately 30 to 45 minutes for the drive.
- Many visitors enjoy lunch on the shaded visitor center deck overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. Remember that it is a public area and the picnic tables are available on a first-come, first-served basis, and cannot be reserved.
- The minimum time for a comfortable field trip is 2 hours. When scheduling your trip, keep in mind the time when you must leave the park in order to get back to your school/drop off point on time. This is your "Departure Time."
- There are no good alternatives on rainy days since the park does not have a large indoor auditorium type facility. If heavy rain is forecast it may be advisable to cancel or reschedule your program.
- Reservations should be made at least two weeks in advance. April and May dates fill rapidly, so make your reservations as soon as possible. Fill out a separate form for each day you plan to visit.
- After selecting a date, be sure to browse through the program description list that follows and select the program that is most appropriate for your class. If you do not find a program that meets your objectives, feel free to contact us anyway. We can usually customize a program to meet almost any need or age range.
- **Be sure to complete the following field trip/event reservation form, even if you have spoken with the park Education Coordinator about a trip. The completed form may be e-mailed, sent through the U.S. Postal Service, or faxed.**

FIELD TRIP RESERVATION FORM

Part I. Your Contact Information

School/Organization:

Teacher Contact Name:

Mailing address:

E-mail address:

Phone number:

Fax number:

Part II. Choosing a Program

Please mark the program that best fits the academic needs of your students. (For program details, please refer to the Program Descriptions portion of the education guide on page 8.)

Pre-K & K: "Tammy Turtle" _____

Grades 4 through 8: "Against All Odds, the Sea Turtles Amazing Battle for Survival" _____

K through 5: "Discover Padre" _____

Grades 2 through 8: "What's In My Tool Box" _____

Grades 6 through 12: "Hidden Treasures" _____

Grades 5 through 9: "Talking Trash" _____

Use this space for further comments, scheduling suggestions, and special considerations. Please let us know if your group will have a snack and/or lunch during your trip.

Part III. Field Trip Details

Proposed Day & Date of Visit:

Expected arrival time:

Grade level or age of the group:

Approximate # of students:

Approximate # of chaperones:

Describe what you are studying or what you hope to gain from this field trip:

PROGRAM CHOICES

Note: This list is by no means all-inclusive. The staff can customize a science-based education program to meet virtually any need for any age group.

Pre-K through 1st: “Tammy Turtle” is a story of two Kemp’s ridley sea turtles that are born at Padre Island National Seashore and grow up to one day return and lay their own eggs. This is a great program to introduce young students to the struggles all animals must overcome in order to survive as individuals and as a species. A variety of learning tools, such as replica turtles, a life sized sea turtle puzzle, and turtle skulls and shells, are used to assist the children in understanding the sea turtle life cycle. (Presentable on-site or off-site).

K through 5th: “Discover Padre” is an excellent choice for large groups. This experience incorporates several “stations” that students explore as they make their way around a circuit along the beach. Teachers/chaperones assist the rangers by self-directing some of the stations. This program enables groups of 20 to 100 students to participate in a variety of engaging activities that help them learn about the Seashore.

Grades 2 through 8: “Against All Odds, the Sea Turtle’s Amazing Battle for Survival” This presentation explores the many challenges for survival that sea turtles must overcome. From the moment the egg is deposited in the sand by its mother, the odds are against the young turtle. An unbelievable number of natural dangers threaten them throughout their lives. Now with an ever-growing population of people adding additional hazards, it is no surprise that sea turtles are struggling to survive. This program examines the challenges we face in our efforts to preserve these beloved animals. (Presentable on-site or off-site).

Grades 2 through 8: “What’s In My Tool Box?” This program looks at adaptations (tools) that animals use to live more efficiently. Our “Bone Box” is filled with animal skulls and skins that enable the students to explore a variety of adaptive traits. They can get a hands-on experience, comparing such things as the teeth of an herbivore to a carnivore, or the brain cavities of a mammal to a reptile. They will explore the different classes of animals and learn how scientists classify animals and birds. (Presentable on-site or off-site).

Grades 6 through 12: “Hidden Treasures” This is a great program to engage the active minds and bodies of older students. Using nets, sieves, and hand tools, students capture, examine, and release the myriad small fishes and burrowing creatures found at the surf’s edge. The various collecting techniques provide an excellent way to get a look at an otherwise hidden part of the island’s wildlife. The program can also be easily adapted for adult groups. Due to the delicate life forms being examined, this program is limited to 20 students.

Grades 8 through 12: “Talking Trash” Each year, marine debris is becoming a bigger issue. This module offers a way to not only help clean the beach, but to also involve the students in a mathematical analysis of the types of garbage they find. A number of activities that examine storm runoff and its consequences precede the clean up. Those activities provide students with a better understanding of how litter from far inland can end up on the beach. The goal is to increase student awareness of the consequences of pollution.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

In order to ensure that your visit is safe and pleasant, it is important to recognize the risks that accompany any outdoor activity. With proper knowledge and appropriate clothing, the hazards can be minimized. In the event of an injury, the park has a first aid station available at the Malaquite Visitor Center for initial injury assessment and treatment. Group leaders are advised to bring medical and insurance information on each participant in the unlikely event a serious emergency arises.

Since many of our school visitors are often too young to understand the dangers, it is important that parents or teachers remind them of several considerations before they arrive in the park. Even teachers and chaperones are sometimes unaware of the various safety concerns. Therefore, it is advised that each adult participant, as well as parents of student participants, receive a copy of this information.

SPECIAL CONCERNS

1. There are NO lifeguards! Be sure all participants understand that entering the water without adult supervision is not advised. The currents vary in strength, but can be quite strong. A swim/no swim policy should be established and articulated to participants prior to arrival at the National Seashore.
2. The greatest hazard is the sun. Be sure to bring sun block and USE IT. Remember that sunscreen will cause a burning sensation if it gets in a child's eyes. Assistance with sunscreen application may be necessary for younger students. For additional sun protection, bring hats, sunglasses, and drink plenty of water.
3. Depending on the wind and currents, there may be jellyfish in the water or washed ashore. Remind students that even dead ones can sting if touched. If you're unsure what it is, don't touch it! Check with a park ranger to see if unusually high numbers of jellyfish have recently been reported.
4. Beachcombers should watch for hazardous materials on the beach. Examples may include light bulbs, medical waste (i.e. syringes, pill bottles, needles, etc), and closed bottles, cans, or barrels that might contain dangerous chemicals and materials. These hazards are not common, but they do occur. Do not touch or otherwise attempt to remove these hazards. Inform park staff so the items may be properly disposed of.
5. Stay off of the sand dunes. The grasses can easily hide either of the two species of rattlesnakes that inhabit the island. Dune vegetation is also fragile and easily uprooted by visitors. The vegetation serves a vital role in protecting the beach from erosion.

Please inform the park ranger if any participants have any known allergies to insect stings. The ranger will have a radio to assist with emergencies.

DAY PROGRAM EVALUATION

Thank you for participating in Padre Island National Seashore's (PINS) environmental education program! Our objective is to provide quality programs that help students gain a better understanding of the world they live in. Please help us improve our program by taking a few minutes to complete this form. All comments will remain confidential.

1. Program title/subject _____ Date of visit _____

About Your Group

2. School/Group name * _____ Participant age(s) _____
(*Please note: if you prefer to remain anonymous you may leave off your school name.)

3. Your title: (Circle one) Teacher Chaperone Scout Leader Other _____

4. Was this your first PINS education program? (Circle one) Yes / No

5. How did you find out about this program? _____

Preparing For Your Program

6. Please rate your ease in making arrangements for this program

- ___ Very easy
- ___ Fairly easy
- ___ Difficult
- ___ Very Difficult
- ___ I did not make the arrangements

7. Please rate the timeliness of receiving your pre-trip information

- ___ Very timely
- ___ Fairly timely
- ___ Untimely
- ___ Very untimely
- ___ I did not make the arrangements

8. Do you have any suggestions for improving the pre-program arrangements?

Continued

About the Program

9. Were the park facilities adequate for the needs of your program? Circle one: Yes No

10. If the answer was no, please explain.

11. How would you describe the education goal(s) of the program?

12. How effective was the program in terms of the following issues?
(Circle one rating per issue.)

	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Barely Effective	Not Effective
A. Overall goal achievement	4	3	2	1
B. Maintained group's attention	4	3	2	1
C. Appropriate instruction level & concepts for the age group	4	3	2	1

About the Instructor

13. Name of the ranger or instructor:

14. How effective was this person in terms of the following:

	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Barely Effective	Not Effective
A. Engaging students in active learning	4	3	2	1
B. Communicating knowledge on topic	4	3	2	1
C. Presenting an organized program	4	3	2	1
D. Creating a good rapport with students	4	3	2	1

Overall Impressions

15. Would you recommend this program to colleagues? Circle one: Yes / No

If no, why not? _____

16. What were the high points of the program? _____

17. What were the low points? _____

18. Is there anything else you would like us to know? _____